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The U.S., the U.N., and the Year 2000

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Following is an address by Richard L. McCall, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, before the St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association on October 14, 1980.

During the past decade the supporters of the United Nations have been fighting an uphill, and oftentimes lonely, battle to maintain our participation in the U.N. system. In the Congress, the supporters have prevailed, but by the slimmest of margins. Yet, we are not out of the woods. The slogan "Get the United States out of the United Nations and the United Nations out of the United States," still has appeal across this country.

Let us go back to the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. Let us suppose there had not been a United Nations. Where would President Nixon, Premier Brezhnev, and the adversaries in the Middle East have turned? Where was the institution to help them freeze the crisis temporarily while preserving their long-range negotiating options? Who could have provided the diplomatic mediation or organized a peacekeeping force to provide the time and opportunity for negotiated solutions? Where would the antagonists have gotten together? Who would have paid for the time and expense of observers, mediators, or for any necessary peacekeeping forces from other countries? Who would have served as the secretariat to coordinate all these activities? What procedures would have been utilized? The list is almost endless.

What do we gain by having a United Nations? We have a Security Council, a Secretariat, and established procedures which permit all of those involved in a crisis to get down to business efficiently and without delay. In 1973, the United Nations played an indispensable role in helping to arrange a cease-fire and to separate hostile armies in the Middle East. U.S., Soviet, Israeli, and Arab diplomats maintain permanent missions at the United Nations in New York. It was a relatively simple matter to get them together in an established forum, with established procedures during a crisis when time was of the essence.

Yet, what if there had not been a United Nations in 1973? Would it have been worth the risk to find out? As then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger observed following the events of 1973: ". . . if this organization has no other accomplishments than its peacekeeping role in this troubled area, it would have well justified itself."

Today, it is another war in the same region of the world. Yet, it is a war unlike any other fought in modern times in the Middle East. It is a war where civilian populations and industrial complexes have become the military targets. And it is a war being waged in a region vital to the economic well-being of the industrialized West and much of the developing world.

In light of the vital stakes for the international community in a quick resolution of this conflict, there are many who probably question the United Nations' present inability to arrange a cease-fire. However, I can assure all of you here that New York has been the scene of diligent diplomatic activity during the course of the past month—activity aimed at limiting the scope of the conflict to the borders of Iran and Iraq, thereby allow-

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ing the international community to find the key to a cease-fire.

The importance of having an international forum in which all nations of the world are represented cannot be underestimated. It would be virtually impossible for the United States and our allies to bring this crisis under control unilaterally in the absence of the U.N. umbrella. It is not inconsequential that the developing world, led by Mexico, has been in the forefront of Security Council activity during this crisis. This involvement on the part of the nonaligned nations has been instrumental in coalescing international resolve in seeking a solution. It has been an effective counterweight to any nation who might be tempted to take advantage of the present chaos in the Persian Gulf to enhance its global position. Once again, what if there were not a United Nations? Could we have contained this conflict, as we have done thus far, in the absence of a forum where nations of the world gather to define, and agree to protect, what is in their mutual interests?

The Global Climate

Yet, there is considerably more to the accomplishments of the United Nations than the role it has played in international crises. The United Nations, as it has approached universality, has become an organization focusing its efforts on a larger view of the world. In so doing, it has prodded the international community into coming to grips with those problems of poverty, illiteracy, hunger, and disease which sow the seeds of conflict.

We are hurtling toward a future world with a population of 2½ billion more people than inhabit the Earth today, most of them destined to live in the poorest countries with per capita incomes hovering at a level of abject poverty, with arable land running out, with forests receding, fresh waters disappearing, and deserts expanding. At present trends, this is what the year 2000 holds for the global community.

Today, one-third of humanity exists in the absence of adequate shelter or food, ill and idle. Other untold millions exist in virtual "Gulags" in their own homes, with no glimpse of a better future and enraged by the injustice of it all. In haste to affix the blame, apportion responsibility, they live in conditions ripe to send angry men and women on the march, to flock behind banners of any redeeming promise or of rage to punish the innocent and guilty alike.

It is a dangerous global climate. A climate where oceans of suffering breed hurricanes of hate, lashing out with destructive force not only where they are spawned, but wherever they reach as well. In this shrinking world of ours, distance no longer guarantees safety. The sane are not immune from the quarrels of the fools, or the affluent secure in the midst of need. We are all vulnerable to the Idi Amins, the Pol Pots, to the Ayatollahs of this world; not because they are insane but because there is rationality in evil. A rationality fed and fueled by the frustration of multitudes of powerless, hungry, and bitter people. It is a rationality that sanctions the flaunting of civilized conduct and bestows virtue on vice. It is a rationality that uses modern weapons to revive ancient emnities. It is a rationality that subjects human beings to a deadly struggle for mere physical survival and in this process makes them objects of terror.

No, we in the United States have not yet suffered its full impact. But in time, we might. Or certainly we will, if those are proven to be right whom we still have the power to prove wrong: the futurists of this day and age, who have taken stock, measured models, and projected trends. The contours of the future that emerge from their drawings are an awesome sight—more people, less food; more pollution, less resources; and a new international order of conflict and chaos.

What a contrast to the dreams of the futurists of yesteryear who had predicted the coming of the golden age, of blooming deserts, of technological wonders, and of men in peace. What an irony that in the closing decades of this century of progress, we look forward to the end of this millenium with foreboding and gloom. It makes me wonder—if the futurists of the past were optimists, and the futurists of the present are pessimists—will there be futurists in the future? Judging from the way we go about our affairs, probably not. I am struck by the fact of how the glaringly obvious has failed to penetrate our national psyche, how oblivious we continue to remain in the face of the clear and present danger that the continuing state of this globe's underdevelopment presents to our nation, to our way of life, to our economic prosperity, and to our freedoms.

World Projections

This year saw the publication of two important studies dealing with our future. Together they received, I would guess, about 1 million times less media attention than Muhammed Ali's latest bout and about as much space as the Washington Redskins get on the front page of the *Dispatch*. These publications, the Brandt Commission's *North-South: A Program for Survival* and *The Global 2000 Report to the President* are not for the faint-hearted. They both diagnose the current state of global economic affairs as dismal. Their prognosis is that the worst is yet to come.

The Brandt report, prepared by an international group of eminent persons headed by the former German Chancellor, focused on the state of relationships between the developed and the developing countries and found the global economy functioning "so badly" and the prospects so "alarming" that only by the assertion of political will, it suggested, can the world community avert disaster. The "Global 2000" study, which was prepared by an interagency group within the U.S. Government, provides dire projections of what will happen to the world's resources, population, and environment if trends and policies around the world continue as they are now.

Neither of these studies speaks of inevitabilities. They both offer a ray of hope, premised on the word *if*: *If* nations and peoples would act early and forcefully, *if* governments demonstrate political will, *if* the international community would make unprecedented steps

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GLOBAL 2000 REPORT

The Global 2000 Report to the President: Entering the Twenty-First Century was prepared by the U.S. Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of State. Volumes 1 and 2 are available through the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Volume 3 is expected to be released in 1981 and will also be available through GPO.

Volume	Stock No.	Price
Volume 1, The Summary Report	041-011-00037-8	$ 3.50
Volume 2, The Technical Report	041-011-00038-6	$13.00
To be released:		
Volume 3, The Government's Global Model	041-011-00051-3	$ 8.00

A PROGRAM FOR SURVIVAL

North-South: A Program for Survival is the report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (more commonly known as the Brandt Commission). It was published by MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. (1980), and is available through private bookstores and also from the Overseas Development Council, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW., Washington, D.C. 20036, at a cost of $4.95.

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toward cooperation. Neither report argues that it is too late, but each in its own way argues that time is fast running out.

I speak of those two studies with some trepidation, because the real tragedy of the bearer of bad tidings is not that he is disliked, but that he is not believed. I know some might dismiss both the Brandt report and the "Global 2000" report as a cyclical rehash of the argument for more foreign aid and as a latter-day Malthusian warning.

But Malthus was an optimist. The gist of his argument was that population will increase at a geometrical rate, while the means of subsistence at an arithmetical rate. The result: a state of insufficient supplies to support life. The modern day projections paint a much bleaker picture. While population pressures are intensifying, the ability of biological systems to provide resources for human needs is eroding.

Forests receding, deserts expanding, pastures overgrazed, seas overfished are not nightmares of times to come. They are happening right now at an accelerated rate. None of these crises respects national boundaries or ideological frontiers. Let me select a few pertinent projections of the future.

- In the next 20 years there will be 2½ billion more people.
- The food deficit for the Third World alone will hover around 75 million metric tons by the year 1990, drawing down global food reserves and leading to worldwide competition for food and to a rapid rise of price levels.
- The search for alternative sources of food will cause drastic depletion of fisheries resources.
- Increased fossil fuel consumption and the greater use of fluorocarbons for this growing population will correspondingly raise atmospheric carbon dioxide and will cause ozone depletion, both of which entail serious climatic changes—in turn affecting our ability to produce food.
- General energy shortages will force increased reliance on nuclear power with its collateral risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and accidents.
- The inability of the developing countries to meet the growing demands—for food and energy alone—of their growing populations will deplete their foreign exchange reserves, raise their debts, in turn lead to defaults and global monetary instability.
- Rapidly growing populations in neighboring developing countries will provoke large-scale migration to the United States with the attendant conflict between our humanitarian impulse and the economic realities.
- Growing scarcities as well as the growing demands of more and more people will place unacceptable strains on the stability of many developing countries, leading to frequent political upheavals threatening American security interests, American investments abroad, and America's access to strategic and critical raw materials.

The problem with statistics and figures is that they have a soothing quality when used in aggregate terms. They keep their perceptual distance. Billions, metric tons, monetary policies—the words of economists—are so impersonal, so unrelated to the monthly paycheck with which we try to make ends meet. And besides, those calamities projected will occur over there and over time. The population explosion in the Third World will not make our streets more crowded, starvation in far away lands will not disturb our calorie count, and, in the final analysis, we are not just a country but a continent of people—self-sufficient, robust, ingenious, and strong.

Interdependence

But clearly, the "Global 2000" report, along with so many others, is not about projections that face only part of the world and its people. They affect all nations. Our economic strength may not shield us from their effects. Our military might may not protect us from their ramifications. The vitality of our political institutions may not survive their challenge. So let me press the point to illustrate with these impersonal statistics how this potentially global system of interdependence is also a global system of mutual vulnerabilities. A few ideas about our economic vulnerability.

The United States is exporting more than $53 billion to the non-oil-producing developing countries. One out of every three dollars of U.S. corporate profits comes from the overseas activities of American companies. Almost one-quarter of our $170 billion in overseas direct investment is in the developing countries. One out of every seven of our manufacturing jobs produces goods for sale overseas. Some 800,000 American jobs in this sector alone depend on exports to the developing countries. U.S. trade with the developing countries—excluding OPEC [Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries]—now exceeds the combined trade we have with Europe, the Socialist bloc, and Japan. In the past decade, U.S. exports to the Third World grew at an average rate of 18% per year, compared with 15% growth for exports to the Western countries. In turn, we import some of the most strategic materials, processed minerals, and metals from the developing countries; 82% of tin, 88% of columbium, 50% of manganese, 45% of cobalt, 39% of tungsten, and so many others. And, let us not forget, 41% of the petroleum we import comes from the developing countries.

To the landless peasant in Bangladesh these macro terms spell the immediate difference between poverty and misery; to us, between comfort and inconvenience. But in the long run they spell a dehumanized world in which our mutual vulnerability will impose only one command—survival. In a world where billions are subjected to the degradation of poverty, the struggle for survival will become the paramount human endeavor. Starving people have never been history's inspiration of heroic epics.

A few years ago, in his study of the Iks—a mountain people in the tri-state region of Kenya, Uganda, and the Sudan—Colin Turnball, the British anthropologist, poignantly described the process of dehumanization of a tribe. His is a story of a formerly proud, prosperous people, subjected to prolonged starvation, who in three generations became the slaves of their worst instincts. In the desperate struggle for food, all bonds of loyalty and love, honor, and decency disappeared in the tribe, in the family, between the old and the young, between parents and children. An isolated case? Perhaps, but as Turnball himself remarked, their regression revealed the "potential for inhumanity, a potential that lies within us all."

When we speak in our country about people living "below the poverty line"—intolerable as their condition is—we cannot even imagine what below the poverty line means in many parts of Africa, Asia, and South America. Below the poverty line means misery; below the poverty line means abject poverty. Abject poverty dehumanizes because it subjects life to the exigencies of mere existence. It is a condition in which people exhaust their energies at the grueling task of just being, with never a chance of becoming. It is a condition in which people squander their energies in the fight for mere physical survival, with their talents unchallenged, their human potential unfulfilled. They wither away instead of reaching adulthood and die before growing old.

Where the basic human needs of food, health, and shelter remain the sole object of unfulfilled wants, no desire can emerge for liberty and no strength is left to protect rights. Where the struggle for liberation from daily necessities overwhelms the necessity for

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freedom, neither basic human needs nor human rights will ever be satisfied. And in a world where tyranny becomes the order of things, no nation, however prosperous and free, can long remain an island of virtue.

This is the political implication of the "Global 2000" report. In stark, unsentimental terms, it means that when global scarcity becomes the order of things, a draconian order will be the simplest answer. The allocation of diminishing supplies among increasing demand will cease to be the economist's art and will be replaced by the economy of command.

Far fetched? Hopefully so, but how convenient it is increasingly becoming in more and more countries. Just count the number of authoritarian governments and totalitarian systems soiling the map of this planet. Far away? Not here, we rightly retort to this Orwellian projection. Hopefully so, but do you remember those few months during the first energy crisis, the lines of cars before the gasoline pumps? Were they always orderly, civilized; where no one ever quarreled? And when will the "no vacancy" sign be put up at our borders? Who will be the victim? The refugee pushed back into the sea or the one who shoves him back? Who will be dehumanized?

Some may say that this "Global 2000" report is yet another example of crying wolf once too often. Indeed reputable scientists disagree among themselves about the nature and the speed of the deterioration of our ecosystem, the global impact of scarcities, and the dynamics of this politics of scarcities. Yet, it is clear that there are important challenges before us. And to meet the challenges we face, we must first of all accept that the primary problem lies not in the state of the world but in our hearts and minds. The magnitude of the problems should not magnify our fears. Fear is the counselor of the doomsayers who lost their capacity to believe.

Our greatest source of strength as a people has been our ability to offer hope to ourselves and others. Hope is an act of heroic defiance of closed tomorrows, of inevitable trends. We can give the lie to the present trends which project the contours of a terrible prognosis for the world in the year 2000.

I had the good fortune to work for Senator Hubert Humphrey. In 1977, Senator Humphrey addressed commencement exercises at the University of Pennsylvania. I would like to quote from that speech, because I believe his observations of 3 years ago are even more relevant today. He stated:

> We face great problems in America and in the world today. But, we can, and we will, overcome them. We can launch a global assault on the historic plagues of mankind—the bondage of hunger, disease, and illiteracy—if we have the will to do so. And as we do, we will move closer to fulfilling the promise of America—a life with dignity in the pursuit of happiness in a free society for our own people and for those throughout the world.

The "Global 2000" report also had its prescription for avoiding the calamities of the future. It called for a higher degree of multilateral cooperation and for the United States to exercise an aggressive leadership role in promoting this cooperation. We have the mechanism for multilateral cooperation in place with the U.N. system. Now all we need is the political will to insure that it works for us all. ■

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